

## **Intermediate Performance Measures and Final Success Standards for WSDOT Wetland Mitigation Sites in Washington**

*WSDOT proposes to make the distinction between intermediate performance measures (intermediate years) that guide site management and final success standards (final year of monitoring) that determine site success.*

Wetland mitigation monitoring for WSDOT projects occurs within an adaptive management framework. Monitoring data are used to for two purposes: to assess site success, and to guide site management during the monitoring period. These distinct roles of monitoring data become muddled when WSDOT staff attempt to report the monitoring results to external stakeholders, such as the public and legislature.

Currently, WSDOT mitigation plans use identical terminology for standards that guide site management, and thresholds that ultimately determine site success. The thresholds set for both purposes are called success standards, performance standards, or similar terms. As a result, when WSDOT reports to the public or the legislature on how often we meet our success standards (or equivalent term), we may be painting a misleading picture: most failed *standards* trigger management that remedy or at least address the problem. A site may fail to meet multiple success standards during early stages of development but meet its final year standards due to active site management. When summarizing the success rate of over 60 mitigation sites to non-wetland specialists, these subtleties are often lost.

Because of the different roles between intermediate measures and final standards that determine success, WSDOT proposes establishing distinct terminology. Intermediate measures would be called “*intermediate performance measures*,” whereas final year thresholds that determine site success would be called “*final success standards*.” By separating these two monitoring functions, WSDOT would be able to describe how successful it has been in achieving mitigation goals and objectives by summarizing the percentage of success standards met.

WSDOT monitoring would continue to report on all data collected for intermediate years and results of remediation actions in annual reports. No change to the regulatory responsibilities or reporting procedure would result from the change in terminology. All failed intermediate performance measures would be evaluated by the mitigation site managers and monitoring staff. Site managers should take corrective action, or provide rationale for not doing so to the monitoring staff. These decisions should be documented. The proposed changes that would result from separating intermediate years and final year “standards” would be as follows:

- WSDOT would report success of mitigation efforts to legislature, executives, and public through attainment of success standards only. Intermediate measures would be considered part of adaptive management.

- WSDOT would consider all sites currently under management (not in final year of monitoring) as “active”- neither successful nor unsuccessful.
- Wetland mitigation plans produced by WSDOT would use separate terminology, “intermediate performance measure” to describe intermediate monitoring measures. The mitigation plan would clearly define these terms in the body of the report. These intermediate performance measures would guide monitoring data collection, and the results would be reported in the annual monitoring report.
- Intermediate Performance Measures will still be considered permit conditions, and the goal of WSDOT will remain full compliance.

*A simplified example follows:*

### **Goal**

To provide wildlife habitat.

### **Objective #1**

Wildlife habitat will be provided by establishing woody cover within the PFO and PSS zones, which will increase habitat diversity within the mitigation site.

### **Intermediate Performance Measures for Objective #1**

Year 1- All woody plant material will exhibit a survival rate of X% during the summer following installation.

Year 3- The PFO and PSS zones (see planting plan, figure X) will include an average of X living woody stems per acre during the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of monitoring.

Year 5- Woody vegetation within the PFO and PSS zones will attain a minimum aerial cover of X% during the 5<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring.

### **Final Success Standard #1**

Year 8- Woody vegetation within the PFO and PSS zones will attain a minimum aerial cover of X% during the 8<sup>th</sup> year of monitoring.

To evaluate how successful this site was at providing woody cover for wildlife habitat, the only value considered is the success standard: % cover during the eighth year.